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GEORGE W. DAWSON
AT WATER



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Entered as Second-class Matter in the Boston Post Office. Issued Semi-monthly. Subscription Price, \$1.00 per Year. Dec. 1, 1893.

No. 5. ATLANTIC NEWS COMPANY, Publishers, BOSTON. 1414 Dorchester Avenue. 5 Cents.

Jocko Kelly at Sea

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THE QUEEN OF HEARTS

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JOCKO KELLY AT SEA;

OR,

THE ARTFUL DODGER'S CLEVER SCHEME.

BY A BOSTON GLOBE REPORTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE ARTFUL DODGER'S CLEVER SCHEME.

JOCKO KELLY'S ringing cry of defiance smote heavily upon the ears of the East Boston policemen, and they looked blankly each at the other, hardly realizing what it meant.

The two headquarters' detectives admitted that the shrewd Artful Dodger had once more baffled them.

Still, the sound of his voice was evidence that he was not far away.

But where was he?

The warm and tumbled bedding on the couch near them showed that the bed had been vacated at their entrance to the room in which they were congregated.

An open window was the only possible avenue of escape.

Detective Watts rushed across the room and looked out into the dim night.

It was three o'clock to the ground.

Surely the clever cracksman had not eluded them by jumping.

But if not that, what means had he taken to get away?

Gerronighty raised the sides of the bed-clothing and looked under the bed.

Not a sign of Jocko Kelly there.

A closet in the room was also looked into, but, aside from a quantity of old clothing, it was vacant.

Watts, still bending out of the window, grew more puzzled than ever.

It had seemed to him, when the entrance to the house had been so suddenly made, that escape from it would be utterly impossible.

Yet Jocko Kelly had accomplished the feat.

How?

The question he could not satisfactorily answer.

Just beneath the window from which the detective was leaning were two patrolmen, both of whom had been placed there to guard against the much-wanted cracksman's escape.

Watts called to them.

"Hi, there!" he cried, "have you seen him?"

"Huh?" called one of the men.

"Did Kelly pass you?"

"Not a sign of him!" was the prompt answer.

"Were you watching close?"

"Yes."

"This window?"

"All over."

"And you didn't see him come out?"

"Not a glimpse."

"Well, you had your eyes shut, then," said Watts, in disgusted tones, drawing his head in the window.

"You're all dead sleepy, and no good!" came piping in at the window again.

It was Jocko Kelly's voice once more.

Instantly Detective Watts was at the window, and Gerronighty's head and shoulders also protruded into the chill outer air.

"He is right under our nose," said Watts.

"Sounds like it," said his mate.

Watts looked upwards above the window.

Nothing but the open sky was to be seen there.

On the side of the building there was absolutely nothing but a drain-pipe and a few swing blinds, that would afford a place for a human being to cling.

To do that would then be an extremely dangerous thing.

Ten feet from the window was a large tree, but it was utterly devoid of foliage, and the searching gaze of the two detectives failed to show Jocko Kelly's presence there.

"He is well hidden," was their mental comment.

Watts again called to the patrolmen below him.

"Here, you fellows, watch sharp. He is round here somewhere. Keep your eyes open, and send the sergeant in here to us."

"All right!" came the reply, and one of the patrolmen passed to the front of the house to speak to Bodenschotts.

He did not immediately return, and a moment later the second patrolman stepped to the corner of the building and looked after him.

Having given orders to the patrolmen without, Detective Watts turned to the two patrolmen who were with him in the room, and said,—

"Go to the upper rooms of the house at once. Perhaps he is up there."

"We looked there once, sir," said one of the men.

"He was here, then," replied Watts. "He may be there now. Go, now, and step lively."

Instantly the two men left the room.

"Now," said Gerronighty, "perhaps we had better make for the roof."

"That's where he is," said Watts. "Come."

Not another second's time was permitted to elapse ere the two detectives went rushing up the next flight of stairs.

The top landing was reached and then a rough, shaky ladder leading to a skylight confronted them.

"You first," said Watts, and Gerronighty began to ascend.

From a lower landing Jocko Kelly's brother Jack and his sister, who had been roused from their quiet slumbers by the unceremonious entrance of the police, watched the search in silence.

This was not the first time the gay and festive Jocko had been looked after in the wee sma' hours of the morning.

It had been a regular thing for the Division 7 police to call at the Kelly home before daylight just following some break of the Artful Dodger.

At first the thing seemed very uncomfortable, but as it became more common they had come to take it in a matter-of-course way, and in silence always gave the police

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"He is right under our nose," said Watts.

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NEL MASTERS,

24ColorCard Camera-Trap.com

He gave the young man a searching look, but seeing that it was not Jocko, he passed upwards to the landing where the ladder was leading to the roof.

Detective Watts was just in the act of climbing through the skylight when Bodenschotts called to him.

Watts stopped in his ascent, and in a few words told the sergeant that he wanted to have him urge his men to a closer watch on the premises, as Jocko Kelly was still in the immediate locality.

Bodenschotts then hurried below again, once more passing Jack Kelly and his sister on the landing.

As he descended detective Watts passed through the skylight on to the roof.

Daylight had now come, and with the exception of the two detectives, there was not a living thing visible on the house top.

"Not here!" said Gerroughty.

"No!"

"Shall we give it up?"

Watts did not reply, but walked to the edge of the roof and looked over.

The two patrolmen were below him.

"It's no use," said he to himself. "This fellow has got wings."

Once again to the baffled detective there came a remembrance of Nat Spence's words:—

"Jocko Kelly will be too much for somebody."

Sure enough, he had been on this occasion.

The two headquarter's detectives were obliged to admit that they had been outwitted.

Determined to give one more try to find the escaped prisoner, they descended the ladder and there were met by Jack Kelly in his shirt-sleeves.

Somehow it struck the detective that when they had gone to the roof, this same young man had been fully dressed and that he had worn a soft felt hat with a rather wide brim.

He had been rudely wakened in his room, but in a couple of minutes he had appeared before the detectives fully dressed.

Yes, the detectives were sure of that.

Now, what was the cause of the change of costume?

In fact, the apparent loss of part of his raiment?

It looked to Watts as though an explanation was necessary.

Five minutes ago dressed, and now but incompletely clad.

A fearful suspicion came into the mind of the headquarter's detective.

For one moment, while they had been on the roof, a clear track had been given from the top of the house to the basement.

Here had been a fatal oversight,

The detective realized the fact, and the missing coat and hat told him instantly that Jocko Kelly had taken advantage of the opening.

This was true.

The Artful Dodger needed but a little loophole, and when this was shown him he slid through it.

Trained always to be alert, the King of Cracksmen upon entering the room after nimbly climbing the water-spout, had seen to it that the door leading to the hall had been securely fastened.

This done he tossed aside his cap, and threw himself upon the outside of the bed without undressing.

Two minutes later he was soundly sleeping.

Hours passed and it was just time for daylight to break.

Still he slept on.

Suddenly a heavy footfall sounded without the door of his room.

Instantly his eyes opened and Jocko Kelly was on his

feet and bounding toward the window left open as he had entered it.

Then came a crash, and the door flew open and police filled the room.

Like a flash the Artful Dodger had swung from the window to the water-spout and was on the roof in an instant.*

So quickly did he move that not even a fitting glimpse did the detectives get of him as he went.

Filled with that reckless spirit of bravado for which he has always been noted, he flung back at the detectives a ringing cry of defiance.

With the house below him filled with detectives and policemen, and guarded on every side by patrolmen, he yet felt able to cope with them successfully and finally to elude them.

He could hear the cries of dismay uttered by his relentless pursuers, and chuckled with glee.

Noting the two patrolmen in the yard below him were not looking his way, Jocko Kelly soon sent forth a second derisive cry and then drew back to cover.

None too soon did he move, because the next instant Detective Watts cast a quick glance skyward.

The Artful Dodger heard the hasty command to the men in the yard and that to the men in the room.

Then he heard the detectives say something about the roof.

A chill caught Jocko Kelly's marrow, but he did not hesitate.

Cautiously he peered out of the skylight.

One patrolman had disappeared and the

ing around the corner.

"It's my only chance," said Jocko to himself. "Here goes!"

So saying, he again clasped the water-spout firmly and slid down it until the open window was reached.

Not an instant did he hesitate.

To remain outside was to be seen by the man in the yard.

Even now he was turning from the corner.

The room alone gave him a chance.

What if a policeman was there?

Then all would be lost.

"But it's neck or nothing," said Kelly. "Here goes,"

and the next moment he stood in a vacant room.

The door was half open to the hall and he heard heavy footsteps passing.

Then he saw Sergeant Bodenschotts pass downward to the street door.

Watts and Gerroughty were now on the roof.

Cautiously Jocko peered into the hallway and saw Detective Watt's legs just disappearing through the skylight.

On the landing below him was his brother Jack, clad in an overcoat and a soft hat.

His sister stood beside him.

"I've a clever scheme," cried Jocko in delight. "I'll foot these cursed cops dead elegant."

Down the stairs he bounded three steps at a time and confronted his astonished brother and sister.

"Quick," he said. "Jack, give me your coat and hat and I'll get away."

Jack Kelly was too much thunderstruck to resist, and Jocko hastily pulled the garments away from him.

The next instant the Artful Dodger put his clever scheme in operation, and went flying down the stairs to the street door, guarded by Sergeant Bodenschotts and two patrolmen.

Bodenschotts was repeating Detective Watt's words to

*The writer of this narrative claims that he is dealing with facts, and that Jocko Kelly actually performed the feats described in this chapter.

the men, urging them to be very watchful when Jocko appeared at the door.

At the bottom of the stairs there had been a milk can.

Jocko now held this in one hand.

Sergeant Bodenschotts looked quickly at him when he appeared, and, having twice seen Jack Kelly on the stairway but a moment before, did just what Jocko had calculated upon.

He mistook the Artful Dodger for his brother.

The make-up was complete, and the milk can fixed things.

Jocko boldly stepped out of the door, and, to clinch things, spoke in his brother's voice to the three men.

"Still looking for me brother? Well, yer won't find him. Cos' he ain't here. See?" and then, with his head cocked on one side, he passed on up the street to the next corner unhindered.

The three policemen laughed at the sally made by the clever fellow, and continued their conversation.

Jocko Kelly reached the street corner.

He saw that the coast was clear, and then he dodged into a doorway and pulled a bell in a vicious fashion.

The door opened and he disappeared within.

The Artful Dodger's clever scheme had proved successful. In kindness let us draw the curtain upon the scene when the detectives discovered how the Artful Dodger outwitted them.

It can be imagined how they felt, and in what a ridiculous position the police were placed.

It was three minutes before they reached the police station speechless and disgraced.

There they found Nat Spence.

He had just reached the police station and was awaiting the return of the squad and their prisoner.

They came, but Jocko Kelly was not with them.

Jocko Kelly had done a wonderful piece of clever work, but he had not yet reached the end of his boldness.

In his temporary retreat he felt secure, but he was not satisfied.

He had visited East Boston with the avowed intention of seeing his sister to say good-by to her.

He had been driven away without a chance to say a word.

Half an hour passed and a messenger was sent to Porter street.

He returned with the information that the coast was clear; that in disgust the police had departed.

Battoning his brother's coat closer about him, and drawing his hat over his face Jocko sallied out, and boldly went back to the very house he had been driven away from an hour before.

He opened the door and went within and confronted the people in the kitchen where they sat at breakfast.

"What are you back here for?" cried Jack Kelly in wonderment.

"I just wanted ter fetch yer coat and hat back and say good-by to yer all, was Jocko's cool reply. "Give me a cup of coffee and then I'm going up-stairs to finish my nap."

The coffee was given him and half an hour later he was once more soundly sleeping in his room with an open window near him.

CHAPTER II.

"JOCKO KELLY HAS GONE TO SEA."

NAT SPENCE'S blood was at the boiling point. The way Jocko Kelly's trail was warming up fired the great detective with unwonted zeal.

He more than ever realized the full weight of his words to the chief of police.

He had told Superintendent Small that Kelly was smart and every hour's developments proved his statements.

Spence felt considerable satisfaction in witnessing the discomfiture of the two headquarters' detectives not unmingled with regrets, however.

He was really sorry that Kelly was still at large, but it would have been a very severe disappointment to him had any other detective run the game to earth.

Nat Spence wanted to bag Jocko Kelly alone and unaided.

He had staked his reputation on this case, and he wanted to make good his words.

He had been close on the Artful Dodger's heels from the first, of that he was certain.

By hard effort he had finally struck a trail and had followed this until it became tangible.

Then he was positive that he had located Jocko Kelly's hand in the robbery of Barber & Company's safe and had then followed a slight clue to East Boston.

Believing that he had Kelly nearly under his thumb, the detective had gone into the station-house of Division 7 to inform the lieutenant in charge that he might have use for a couple of men in the course of a few hours.

But ere he broached the subject of his errand, he was informed that his rivals in the case were a couple of hours ahead of him, and that with a squad of men they had gone to apprehend Jocko Kelly.

How hard he had worked to gain the knowledge he held, Nat Spence well knew.

Hours and days had passed, and he had finally been about at the goal.

Yet a single stroke of luck had placed his competitors in equal possession of his knowledge, and they were well in advance of him.

It came like a dose of physic to Nat Spence, but he swallowed the bitter pill with a good grace, and wished Watts and Gerroughty success in their mission.

He said nothing about the occasion of his own call at the station-house, and taking a seat waited for the outcome of the early morning expedition.

The minutes passed, but there came no call for the police wagon from the neighborhood of Porter street.

But at last there came the sound of the tramp of the feet of the squad, and the baffled officers returned.

The escape of Jocko Kelly was briefly reported, and then it was voted unanimously that the matter be kept a profound secret in police circles.

And it was very zealously guarded.

But it has been whispered that a certain police sergeant was transferred from a certain police precinct to another precinct not long afterward, and he went from Division 7.

Nat Spence was glad that Kelly escaped the net spread for him, but regretted that the interference with his own plans had occurred.

He had felt positive that Jocko Kelly had been in East Boston, and had determined to use strategy instead of boldness in attempting his capture.

But now it became necessary for him to begin anew on the case.

What Jocko would do next the great detective could not conjecture.

That he would be harder to find than ever before, the detective was certain.

"It will teach him caution," said Nat Spence to himself. "Or, on the other hand, it may be the cause of making him bolder. He may think that he had such luck this time, that he can always walk under our noses. But I'll locate him if it is possible. He can't fool Nat Spence very long."

There was a lively row at police head-quarters that day

and numerous general orders were issued, all relative to Jocko Kelly.

Specials were detailed to guard every railroad station and steamer dock in the city, and the most rigid scrutiny of people in the least resembling the Artful Dodger was made.

But not a sign of him was seen.

From the Allan Line docks in Charlestown the good ship Virginian sailed away, bearing two of Jocko Kelly's pals, Sly Pete Waldron and Fighting Bill Grant.

But Jocko Kelly was not with them, and they both mourned for him, believing that Charlestown locks and bars were threatened him once more.

But, oh! how Sly Pete's blood would have tingled and danced through his veins could he have known how cleverly Jocko Kelly had outwitted his foes and walked so boldly out from their midst at a time when they had him so closely cornered.

Ah! yes, Sly Pete would have been much pleased.

Nat Spence left the neighborhood of police station 7 in a sad and dejected manner.

It was not pleasant for him to consider what *might* have been in the light of what *was*.

Nor did it surprise him when he was sent for by Chief of Police Small.

There was not a pleasant smile on Small's face when Spence responded.

The conversation of the two men was brief, Small merely asking Spence his opinion of the state of affairs.

Spence's replies were mostly evasive and non-committal. He wished time to gather the scattered and broken threads of his skein again before he said anything.

Chief Inspector Eldridge also demanded an interview with Spence, but nothing apparently grew from it.

It was noon ere Spence again got down to fine work in the case.

He worked East Boston with a fine tooth comb, as it were, but at first with absolutely no success.

Three o'clock finally came, and Spence found himself in a crowd of Cunard dock laborers in a drinking resort.

The actions of one of the youngest men in the party struck Spence as being rather out of the natural.

Accordingly Spence began to feel an interest in him.

The young fellow bore a striking resemblance to Jocko Kelly.

So much so that Spence gave him a second look before he was willing to say that it was not the Artful Dodger.

The young Cunard employee seemed unusually flush with money, while his companions appeared rather short of funds.

"An' so ye did not sail to-day?" one of the crowd cried, slapping the young fellow on the back.

"Yes, I thought I wouldn't go," said he evasively.

"Did they fire ye?" asked another.

"No."

"But how does it happen that you have so much money? It ain't pay day," said the first speaker.

"No. But I'm never broke," said the young fellow, who, by the conversation, Spence decided must be a seaman or deck-hand.

Spence noticed how the questions of his companions seemed to bother him and became more interested.

"No, but ye were rather hard up yesterday," was the retort to his last answer.

"Say," said the sailor, "what do you care why I didn't go with the Scythia, and what do you care if I have got lots of money while yesterday I didn't seem to have so much?"

He was mad.

"Ah! nothin' much," said the first speaker, "only

fellers like you don't often get well paid for *not* sailing in a vessel, as you seem to have been."

"Say, I'm using you fellows white by fetchin' you in here and setting up the drinks, so you mind your own business, will you?"

"Well, Mike, there's no need of yer getting mad," interposed a third speaker. "You are all right, and Dave meant all right by wot he said. Don't get mad."

"I ain't a-gettin' mad," said the fellow called Mike, "But I don't like a feller to be too inquisitive when it's none o' his business."

"There has been so much said about this matter that we are getting interested," said a fourth. "Mike, if you struck it rich to-day and got well paid for staying away from the Scythia when she sailed, tell us about it. Who was the duck to throw away his dollars?"

"I've nothing to say," said Mike angrily. "You fellers can take another drink with me, and then I'll leave yer." So saying he took a roll of silver coin from his pocket and tore the paper from it.

These scraps of paper as torn fell to the bar-room floor. Innocently, to all appearance, Nat Spence stooped and picked them up.

As he turned them over in his hand and rolled the curled pieces out, he could hardly refrain from giving a start of surprise.

On the inner surface of one piece of paper he saw the printed words,—

BARBER & CO.

"Part of the money from the safe robbery!" he muttered beneath his breath. "N. B. This young fellow have a hand in that job?"

Nat Spence was more than ever attentive in his observation of the young man.

But a second thought gave the answer to his self-addressed query.

"No," said the detective to himself, "if he had a hand in the affair, he would have gone away on the Cunarder this afternoon. He got paid to stay here. Why? Who would do that? Ah! Would anybody be able to buy his berth as a deck-hand? It's what has been done! Jocko Kelly, you are a clever one, and no mistake. Now, I must find out the whole case. He is leaving the crowd now. I'll follow him and get the truth from him, even if I have to lock him up."

Mike, the deck-hand of the departed Scythia, to avoid the questions asked by his companions, quitted them abruptly after the round of drinks was set forth and left the bar-room.

Nat Spence followed him.

At the first street corner the detective stepped to his side and spoke to him pleasantly.

But Mike gave a surly reply and Spence decided not to lose a minute's time.

Instantly, before the young fellow could raise a finger, a pair of handcuffs appeared, and were snapped on his wrists.

"I want you," said Spence.

"What for? What have I done? Am I arrested?"

"That's it," said the detective. "You have money about you that came from a robbed safe. You have also aided an escaping convict in getting away from justice."

"I didn't know that," said Mike, a terror-stricken look in his eyes. "He only wanted my job and I sold him the place."

"What did he look like?" asked Spence. "Like this?" and he held a photograph of Jocko Kelly under the young man's nose.

"Yes, that's him!" cried Mike. "He's the feller."

"That'll do," said Spence, and the next instant he

unlocked the handcuffs from his prisoner's wrists, and pointed up the street.

Glad to escape, the young fellow started off on the dead run.

Nat Spence started for police headquarters.

Half an hour later he walked into his chief's presence and asked for a leave of absence.

Chief Inspector Eldridge immediately referred him to Superintendent Small.

That official was somewhat surprised to see Spence again after his conversation of the morning.

"Any news?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Spence; "and I want a leave of absence."

"How long?"

"Indefinite!"

"We cannot spare you."

"Very well, sir. I therefore tender you my resignation, to take effect immediately."

"What?" cried Small.

"Yes, sir."

"But you must work up this Jocko Kelly case."

"For that purpose I asked a leave of absence."

"You have a clue?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"That I do not wish to tell you, sir."

"Sir, I command you."

"You have my resignation, sir."

"See here, Spence, we have had a talk on this line once before," said Small angrily.

"Yes, sir," said the detective quietly.

"Well?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I am working the Jocko Kelly case as I think it ought to be worked. I must and will not be questioned or interfered with. Either I get the leave of absence or I quit the staff."

"You are on a sure lay?"

"I believe so."

"You shall have your way. Now, Mr. Importance, will you please tell me where Jocko Kelly is?" said Small with mock politeness.

"That I cannot do. But this I will tell you. Jocko Kelly, whom you will remember I called clever a few days ago, has fooled us all again, and has slid out from our very fingers. He has gone to sea and I am going to follow him. When next you hear from me, you will know that I have a sure thing of it, and that Jocko Kelly will be in a position where he cannot escape me. Good-day, sir."

"Good-day. I wish you luck!" said the chief of police. The door closed after the departing figure of the great detective.

It was many weeks afterward when Superintendent Small again saw Nat Spence.

CHAPTER III.

THE DEVIL FIDDLER A TUNE.

THE rolling ocean! The tumultuous Atlantic! Sailing majestically, her sharp nose cutting the waves in twain, the Cunarder Scythia was fast leaving the continent of North America far away in the west.

Three days out from Boston!

The romance of the first few hours of a glorious sail down the harbor had long since worn away, and the dull monotony of a long sea voyage had literally set in in earnest.

The first pangs of sea-sickness had been overcome and forgotten.

Yet there were still many victims of the malady upon decks and below in the cabins.

There was not a large number of passengers on this trip of the Scythia.

The returning trips from Europe brought more passengers in the autumn months.

Lounging about the decks in various attitudes were a number of cabin passengers.

It was a beautiful day, but the wind sweeping across the decks was strong and chill.

But the confinement of the saloons was irksome and the deck more attractive.

In the distance a long line of smoke marked the course of a steamer, and nearer the white sail of a schooner could be seen.

The sky was cloudless.

The officers of the vessel were slowly pacing the forward decks, and here and there a deck-hand was busily engaged.

In groups of two, three, and four a score of passengers were enjoying themselves in conversation.

One group of four was more conspicuous than the others. It consisted of three gentlemen and a lady.

All were dressed in fashionable attire, and apparently belonged to the upper walks of life.

The lady was particularly attractive in appearance.

She was young and handsome, not beautiful, but elegant and stylish.

She was perhaps twenty-eight years old, of medium height, well-proportioned, and had a face composed of even features, and a pair of piercing dark eyes.

Her hair was dark and her skin fair.

Two of the gentlemen were middle-aged, and the third not more than two years older than the young woman.

He was tall and of slim build.

His features were good, but his eyes always had a queer expression, and were very restless.

In the conversation, in which he took an active part, he seldom looked the people whom he addressed squarely in the face, but kept his gaze roving off across the stretch of waters.

His light overcoat was buttoned closely, and the collar was turned up about his ears.

The party was in a very jolly mood, and seemed to enjoy the roll and pitch of the vessel as she rode the waves.

Especially vivacious was the young woman.

She laughed and chatted gayly, and seemed to aim many of her words at the senior man of the party.

Much of what she said, to an interested listener, would have seemed laden with a double meaning.

And the elder gentleman seemed not to understand this, but appeared to take great pleasure in following her every word closely.

He was a man of portly build, with a kind, open face, from the sides of which extended bushy iron-gray whiskers.

In Boston business circles for years, he had been a prominent personage.

An active spirit in all affairs tending to the prosperity and good of the modern Athens.

A leader in the work of the Chamber of Commerce, and an active member of the Merchants' Club.

But the young man seemed to fully understand the meaning of every word the woman spoke; and, occasionally, a warning look appeared to flash from beneath his eyebrows.

The other man appeared to be utterly oblivious to what was passing, and yet, spoke frequently in the course of the conversation.

From the woman's ears there hung a pair of diamond earrings, the gems in which sparkled in the sunlight.

Diamonds also flashed on her fingers, uncovered by gloves or mits.

The young man, also, wore a valuable diamond ring on the little finger of his left hand.

The merchant's coat was unbuttoned, and his hands uncovered.

Diamond studs flashed on his shirt-front, and a ring was on his finger.

But, notwithstanding his jewels, his entire dress was modest and practical.

The other man wore no jewels that were visible.

A deck-hand of the steamer had stood at a distance from the party, closely observing them; and walking slowly past them, his sharp eyes noted the above.

It was Jocko Kelly, the King of Cracksmen.

His experienced eye was always observant where there were diamonds to be seen.

Jocko Kelly knew a good stone when he saw it; and he knew how and where to sell one when it came into his possession.

As he looked upon the pretty little sparklers, worn by the steamer's passengers, he at once began to scheme to possess them.

How it would be accomplished he did not know; but, as the days went by, and several more were certain to elapse before England was reached, he hoped a chance would present itself so that a change of ownership would result.

There were several hundred dollars' worth of stones to be seen.

But it was not alone the diamonds that caused Jocko Kelly to feel an interest in the people before him.

It was something else.

He was positive that he had seen the two youngest members of the quartette elsewhere.

Where?

He could not determine at once to his entire satisfaction.

But he had seen them before.

There was no doubt of that.

Twice he walked past the little group, and then, for fear of attracting their attention, he returned to the small task at which he had been laboring.

But he still kept an eye on them all.

"I know that black-faced young fellow," said Kelly; "and I've seen the woman. Who are they? I must find out, and get those diamonds, too."

He did not speak aloud, but muttered the words to himself in an undertone.

As he continued to watch them a suspicion entered his mind that the young man and the woman were at work on a deep plot in secret, and that the elderly merchant was to be their victim.

From his general appearance, and the deduction drawn by the style of his diamonds, Jocko Kelly decided that it was rare game that they were after; and then the plot in his own mind broadened.

"Oh! dere will be some lively times before we get ter England," was his silent comment.

He could hear the conversation of the people, but he saw nothing of importance in it.

But the actions of the uneasy-eyed young man, and a word now and then,—which could bear a double meaning,—from the young woman, kept his ears wide open.

"Yes, Mr. Dilmore," cried the young woman with a laugh, addressing the merchant. "It really seems a pity that you should take this delightful trip to Europe unaccompanied by your family. I am sure they will miss you so much."

"Ah! yes, of course, Miss Pelton, but then you know

we men of business can't have our family at our heels all of the time."

"No. Very true," she replied. "But when it comes to a trip to Europe they should be included."

"This is to be only a flying trip," said the merchant. "I shall not be gone much, if any, longer than I usually am when I run west to Chicago and the other large cities of America."

"No. But it's very much different," she retorted with a toss of her head. "Isn't it, Mr. Blake?" appealing to the second elder gentleman.

Thus appealed to, Mr. Blake made reply briefly, and then apparently wearied of the woman's talk, to him meaningless, he excused himself from the party and walked away from them to the vessel's rail, over which he leaned and began to study the waves.

But to the woman and the young man the talk with Merchant Dilmore had more than ordinary meaning.

Florence Pelton and Layden Gray, as they were registered on the ship's passenger list, had a deep plot in progress.

They were leagued together.

Jocko Kelly had shrewdly guessed the truth.

That much he had not erred in his surmises.

But the whole he did not know.

He did not remember where he had seen Layden Gray in the past, nor did he know who the woman was who called herself Florence Pelton.

Blake's withdrawal from their midst was not for a moment regretted by the remaining members of the party. All, including Merchant Dilmore, were glad to have him depart.

Instantly the conversation changed from the general line in which it had been conducted.

"But, Mr. Dilmore," said Florence Pelton with an entrancing smile, "you have not told me why you make such a hasty trip. The object of it? I am very much interested in all things out of the ordinary, and a trip to Europe in a hurry, and then an immediate return seems to me to be an extraordinary thing to do."

And she looked into the merchant's face with a frank look of innocence and apparent interest.

As if this artful young woman had not long since known as well as did Merchant Dilmore the vital interests at stake in his ocean trip!

Yes, indeed, she well knew, and so did the man Layden Gray.

Yet not a suspicion against her honesty entered the mind of Jonathan Dilmore.

But he did not intend to tell the woman what his errand was, and evaded her question by the simple reply:—

"Business calls a business man suddenly sometimes."

"Yes," said Layden Gray, speaking for the first time in a few moments, at the same time drawing a step backward and winking expressively at his female ally, "Business is a hard master. Ah! there is my friend Colonel Masters. Excuse me; he just beckoned to me. Mr. Dilmore, I will leave you to the tender mercies of Miss Pelton, and join the Colonel. I shall see you at the table later, and I hope to see you in the card-room by and by."

Jocko Kelly, still a watchful observer of what was passing, saw that Miss Pelton had been given an opportunity to be alone with the lamb which was to be shorn.

"Oh, but I'm dead fly," said Jocko, "and you can bet your sweet life that I get in on this game."

Miss Florence Pelton was a handsome woman.

She was also personally magnetic.

Merchant Dilmore was a lover of handsome women, and susceptible to their charms.

Florence Pelton had not been idle with her eyes.

She had not shown her white, pearly teeth, nor her pointing red lips without an object.

Merchant Dilmore had not lost a word that she spoke, nor a single glance from her eyes.

But he had not seen the double meaning of her words, nor that the looks she beamed upon him were forced.

He had failed to see that she was an actress.

But he did see her, and she welcomed first the withdrawal of Mr. Blake, and then the departure of young Gray.

He was alone with the handsomest woman on the ship.

He had been presented to her at the supper table the evening before by young Gray, who at that time had hinted that he didn't believe Miss Pelton would be averse to a little flirtation with such a pleasant gentleman as was Mr. Dilmore.

"She seems to me to like the chaps who have plenty of money and are willing to spend it," Layden Gray had said.

Therefore, Mr. Dilmore was duly presented to Miss Pelton but—hem—heh—how had he become acquainted with young Gray?

Now really, Mr. Dilmore could not exactly remember.

It was faintly remembered, but so faintly that he was not certain, that he had been standing alone, looking back at the fast receding outlines of the New England coast, when he was spoken to by a young man who subsequently gave him his card.

Layden Gray was the young man.

"But then, gentlemen get acquainted so differently at times," said Mr. Dilmore to himself, and then he dismissed the subject from his mind.

It was enough that through Layden Gray he had been enabled to meet Miss Pelton.

In the evening there had been a lack of amusement, and an absence of passengers, most of whom were hidden in their staterooms, victims of old ocean.

Jonathan Dilmore never was sea-sick.

The time hung heavily on his hands.

He had looked the vessel over from stem to stern, and high and low for Miss Pelton, but she was not to be seen.

Inquiry resulted in disclosing the information that Florence Pelton was indisposed.

She was earthly, and was sea-sick.

At the breakfast table she put in a late appearance, but not a trace of the "late unpleasantness" was to be seen.

But it was not until after dinner, and quite late in the afternoon that Jonathan Dilmore had an opportunity to speak to her.

Once he saw her with young Gray, but they moved off at the indication that the merchant desired to approach.

But at last Gray had appeared upon deck, and with him was Florence Pelton.

They accosted Mr. Dilmore, and were soon afterwards joined by Mr. Blake.

Jonathan Dilmore had felt somewhat piqued at the disposition that had been shown in avoiding him, but soon forgot it, and when he was again in the handsome woman's presence he did not recall the matter.

Now Blake and Gray had left him alone with the woman.

It was to be days before England would be reached, and Dilmore calculated on having ample time to conduct his contemplated flirtation with Miss Pelton.

He determined to test the extent of Layden Gray's judgment of human nature.

The tempting bait held out to Merchant Dilmore has caught many a rare fish, and he seemed almost in the net at the start.

Utterly unsuspecting of a plot being developed, he went blindly on his way, heedless and persistent.

Lyman Blake saw an old man make a fool of himself, as

he had seen others, times without number, and looked on and smiled a smile of commiseration, but did not see the secret that lay behind outward seeming.

Layden Gray held aloof from all apparent participation in affairs, but still kept the fire hot and the pot boiling.

Florence Pelton played her part and led the merry march with the devil for a fiddler.

And Jocko Kelly stood where he could see everything, and waited for the fruit to ripen sufficient for the plucking.

CHAPTER IV.

COLONEL MASTERS, THE MAN OF DESTINY.

THE card-room of the Scythia was almost deserted.

The nightly revel of the devotees to Bacchus and that fickle goddess who rules the destinies of men, Dame Fortune, had not yet begun.

In the cosy and neatly arranged amusement room but two of the passengers of the Cunarder had put in an appearance.

They were the young man who called himself Layden Gray, and his friend Colonel Masters.

Colonel Masters was fully ten years older than Gray, and entirely unlike him in appearance.

He had a sort of military appearance and would easily pass for a retired army officer.

Colonel Masters made it one of his special duties to cultivate this military air, and took great pride in the title he bore.

And Colonel Masters would not have had it whispered to the world that his title had been entirely an honorary one.

He did not even have the right to it which goes with an appointment on the Governor's staff.

But nevertheless Colonel Masters was a colonel.

He was called colonel everywhere, and there were few people who would have questioned his right to the title.

Nobody knew who Colonel Masters was.

He had been seen frequently in the prominent lingering places in the Hub, and was often met with at the club rooms.

How he got there nobody seemed to know, but he was there nevertheless.

His was a familiar figure at Young's Hotel at noon time when thousands of Boston's business men were there for lunch.

He knew everybody, but nobody knew him further than that he was called Colonel Masters, and that he was a jolly good fellow.

Always ready with a joke, a hearty good-morning, and always ready to take a drink, and offer a cigar in return.

Colonel Masters always seemed to have plenty of money, and never was known to ask for a loan.

He had been known to step into the stock exchange and place several thousands of dollars on certain railroad stocks, and had always been a winner.

Sometimes he had been heard quoting the sayings of prominent bank officials, and had been seen in their company at private gatherings on sundry occasions.

It had been whispered that he was a good poker player, and that he was well acquainted with the crowd that hangs out in the neighborhood of the Revere House.

Sometimes he had been seen at the Tremont House, corner of Beacon street.

But whether or no Colonel Masters was a real, genuine, bona fide colonel was a question that nobody asked, and few could have answered.

It was a good thing to know Colonel Masters, and it was not a good thing to know Colonel Masters.

Opinions differed there.

Some people thought Colonel Masters was sporty, others said he was a gentleman of leisure.

He had appeared in Boston about six months before our story opens, and was liable to leave any day for new fields.

Nobody said a word that in a positive way questioned his integrity.

But Colonel Masters seemed a doubtful personage notwithstanding.

He had a fund of good stories, and he told them well.

It was said that his anecdotes of the war were rather overdrawn, but then a colonel should always have some right to take liberties with facts.

So much for Colonel Masters.

When that much is known of him all that anybody seemed to know is told.

One day Colonel Masters met Jonathan Dilmore.

He knew him afterward as he seemed to know other prominent bank officials.

Three months passed.

Jonathan Dilmore knew Colonel Masters just as he had known him the first time he had met him in the lobby at Young's.

Another month passed, and Jonathan Dilmore casually remarked that he was going to take the next steamer for England.

Two hours afterward and Colonel Masters made the same remark.

The next day Colonel Masters and Jonathan Dilmore were passengers on the Scythia of the Cunard line.

Colonel Masters was missed from Young's and the other places, but Jonathan Dilmore's absence was not remarked.

Jonathan Dilmore, when he met Colonel Masters at supper table, after Boston harbor had been left, expressed surprise at seeing Colonel Masters.

Colonel Masters expressed no surprise at seeing Jonathan Dilmore.

Jonathan Dilmore had been obliged to make hasty preparations for his ocean voyage, and went because he was obliged to go.

Colonel Masters went because Jonathan Dilmore did.

Jonathan Dilmore did not know that.

He had been in a fever of excitement for a week.

A dozen times a day he had sent messages by cable to England, and received as many replies.

Twenty times a day his despatches had flashed over the wires to New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago.

In Colonel Masters' inside pocket were copies of every message Jonathan Dilmore had sent and received.

Thrice within the week Jonathan Dilmore had been to New York, and once to Philadelphia.

Colonel Masters had not been far from his elbow.

Jonathan Dilmore had been wild, uneasy, and fitful for many days.

Colonel Masters never had changed a muscle, nor acted in the least unlike the Colonel Masters everybody knew.

Jonathan Dilmore had reason for uneasiness.

The prosperous merchant, who, for years had stood at the head of the Boston business world, had gradually, unwittingly, but unavoidably, been drawn into the meshes of an entangling combination of circumstances.

Ruin stared him in the face!

He had felt the web enveloping him for weeks, and had vainly striven to escape.

His vast resources had been cut off one by one.

Some of his credits had been withdrawn, and even his paper had been refused.

Yet there was no apparent reason for such a state of affairs.

He knew of no cause why he should feel uneasiness because of money matters.

He was worth three millions at least.

He could use cash if people did not want to give him credit.

But to do that he was obliged to sacrifice two or three splendid paying properties.

Then there suddenly came a run on the bank of which he was president, and that became endangered.

The other gentlemen interested in the bank had been powerless to stem the tide, and then Jonathan Dilmore had been obliged to step in and put his own shoulder to the wheel in a vigorous fashion.

That resulted in another sacrifice, and before he knew it he had a million dollars tied up in the bank, where it would doubtless remain for months.

And he needed that money in other directions.

Why his paper would not go he could not determine.

The fact that there had been some tremendous failures could not have been a cause.

But it went from one thing to another, and in two months' time Jonathan Dilmore's three million dollar pile had lost a third of its proportions, and a half of what remained was tied up in his bank.

So it had gone on from one thing to another, until Jonathan Dilmore began to think that even a millionaire is not secure financially.

At last, as repeated defeats crowded upon him in unforeseen places he began to look for assistance from his friends.

But one after another deserted him, all claiming that they were themselves pressed close to the wall; and true enough, subsequent events proved that they told him truly.

But behind it all he feared that he had an unseen enemy at work.

But there was nobody whom he could suspect.

He was uneasy and bitterly mourned that he had entered into certain speculations.

These had failed utterly, and he had little hopes of recovering more than half of the money he had invested in them.

So ruin stared him in the face.

He could see where his remaining million could be speedily ingulfed, and with the rest of his capital tied up so helplessly in his bank what could he do?

But that was not all: a second attack threatened the bank, and if it came what could be done?

The failure of the mammoth English and French banking establishment had worried American capitalists, so that all were busy looking to themselves, and there was no hope of assistance.

The telegraph had repeatedly told him of this, fact, and further visits to New York had proved it conclusively.

Wirings to England had given some encouragement, and then he hastily decided to visit them in person.

Nobody seemed aware of the fact that he was endangered financially, and Jonathan Dilmore hoped that English assistance would come in time to tide over his affairs and place him again in the supreme and exalted position where he had always been found.

Once back there he would pay off a few scores that were accumulating during this siege.

Somebody would be pinched in return, that was certain.

And that was the state of affairs when Jonathan Dilmore became a passenger on the Scythia.

Now did anybody know that he was financially pressed?

Colonel Masters was the only man who could have answered the question.

His visit to England was made because Jonathan Dilmore was going there.

The telegrams received and sent by Jonathan Dilmore were all in Colonel Masters' keeping.

And of this fact, and that his every financial move for a

three-month had been dictated by Colonel Masters, Jonathan Dilmore was also ignorant.

Nor would he, business experienced though he was, have believed it had been told.

Colonel Masters was not such a power as that!

Oh, no!

Impossible!

Therefore Jonathan Dilmore had met Colonel Masters at table with cordial greeting.

He had conversed with him briefly in the saloon in the evening, and later had even sat at table with him while a light game of poker had been indulged in.

Layden Gray had dropped into the game at Colonel Masters' suggestion.

Jonathan Dilmore had lost a few bank-notes and so had Colonel Masters.

Layden Gray had been more fortunate, and had left the table the only winner.

The next day Layden Gray had excused himself from Jonathan Dilmore's and Miss Florence Pelton's presence, to speak with his friend Colonel Masters.

But then Colonel Master was everybody's friend.

Therefore Jonathan Dilmore had not given the matter a second thought.

He had gladly accepted the opportunity offered him of being alone with Miss Pelton, and for the next hour he was very devoted in his attention to her.

Again in the early evening he was at her side, and after half an hour in the saloon they walked together on the deck of the steamer.

While he was thus engaged, Colonel Masters and Layden Gray were observed together, and afterward they passed into the unoccupied card-room.

Colonel Masters' face was perfectly passive.

Not a movement or line in it betrayed what was passing in his mind.

This man was stolid as marble.

Verily he was a man of destiny.

His younger companion, it was plainly seen, was not such a master of himself.

His face was slightly flushed, and he was inwardly disturbed by suppressed excitement.

"I cannot let this thing go on in the way you are working it," he said in a low voice to Colonel Masters.

"That is why you asked me to step in here?" asked the Colonel in a calm voice.

"Yes. I can do your bidding in nearly all things, but when you deliberately throw her in a place where she is liable to be lost to me I cannot stand it."

"So you fear for the safety of the girl?" said Colonel Masters, elevating his eyebrows.

"That's just it," said Layden Gray. "I have understood from the first that you only wanted her with us as a blind, not that she should take an active interest in this affair."

"Are you serving me or are you not?" asked Colonel Masters.

"Yes, of course. But—"

"No buts. You are getting well paid for all you are doing. You have had two thousand dollars from me already, and you have been at work but a month. She has received a like sum; that means that you have received four thousand dollars. There is more to come. Now what have you to complain of?"

"The pay has been good, I find no fault with that; but not for ten thousand dollars would I have her sacrifice!—that is not in the bargain," said Layden Gray nervously.

"How is she being sacrificed?" asked Colonel Masters calmly.

"You are throwing her into contact with that man, and making me assist in it."

"Well, can't you trust her with him?"

"How far are you going to drive things? That's what I want to know."

"Oh! then you are satisfied now, but are afraid that I shall order the surrender of the fortress?"

"Yes; you have no heart, and to bring about the end you are after, although I confess I do not know what that is, I know you would sacrifice her ruthlessly."

"There is no danger of her at present," said Colonel Masters; "you can rest easy on that score. But I should think you would know from the way that you obtained possession of her that no woman can be trusted."

Utter amazement, a look of blank astonishment, and Layden Gray's face was a sight to see.

He turned red.

Then pale, and then his lower jaw dropped and he essayed to speak, but only a half-gasped word passed his lips:—

"Devil!"

It was all that he could utter.

"It's all right," said Colonel Masters calmly; "don't mind it. Compose yourself. You are to play cards to-night, and your nerves must be steady. He is to lose heavily to-night, and we are to win again. Hush! do not speak, I hear his step."

The next moment and the card-room door opened, and Jonathan Dilmore entered.

His face was flushed and his eyes were sparkling.

He looked like a man who had just won a decisive and an important victory.

He thought he had.

CHAPTER V.

"THE QUEEN OF HEARTS."

"NOW, gentlemen, what shall the game be? State the limit!" Colonel Masters was the speaker, and as he uttered the words he lightly handled a deck of fancy pasteboards.

Four gentlemen were seated at the table.

Lyman Blake, Layden Gray, Jonathan Dilmore and Colonel Masters.

At a second table another party was just forming.

The evening festivities were about to begin.

The social amusements of the saloon had lost their interest, and the gentlemen were seeking excitement of a different nature.

Lyman Blake had followed immediately at Jonathan Dilmore's heels, and had been gladly welcomed by Colonel Masters upon his entrance to the card-room.

From that time on gentlemen arrived one by one.

Choosing their seats, the four men arranged themselves at a table, and Lyman Blake produced a new pack of cards.

The seal of the manufacturer had never been broken.

He tossed them carelessly upon the table, and with an inquiring look Colonel Masters reached for them.

In response to Lyman Blake's nod of assent, he broke open the seal, and sliding the cards lightly through his fingers, discarded the joker.

"State the limit!" he said carelessly.

"Make it within reason," said Blake, with a smile.

"Anything suits me," said Jonathan Dilmore, punching Layden Gray familiarly in the side.

Gray's villainous eyes flashed ominously, and involuntarily his hand dropped to his hip.

Colonel Masters' keen eye was on him, and the tip of a shoe touched him on the shin beneath the table.

"I'll stay if you do not go above my pile," said Gray, joining in the chorus passing around the table.

"Shall I name it?" asked Colonel Masters.

"Yes," said Jonathan Dilmore, "we can safely intrust it to you."

As the merchant spoke, Gray covertly glanced at him.

Colonel Masters saw the look.

The man of destiny easily read the thoughts in his young tool's mind.

Layden Gray was burning with compressed jealousy.

The attention Jonathan Dilmore had shown to Florence Pelton had proved a menace to his peace of mind.

Colonel Masters neither by word nor sign betrayed what was in his mind.

But Layden Gray was in a murderous mood, that was certain.

Colonel Masters looked at Blake again inquisitively.

Blake once more nodded.

"Then we will leave it to the cards," said Colonel Masters. "The limits shall be in hundreds, according to the spots of the card which falls to Mr. Dilmore in throwing once round. All picture cards to count as ten."

"Good," said Jonathan Dilmore, heartily. "I'll pin my faith and luck on the queen."

"The queen of clubs?" said Layden Gray, meaningly.

"No, the *queen of hearts*," retorted Jonathan Dilmore.

Layden Gray bit his nether lip.

Colonel Masters again kicked him beneath the table.

Lyman Blake saw the implied meaning of Jonathan Dilmore's words, but could not fathom the depth that lay in Layden Gray's spiteful sentence.

"You evidently wish to play with a thousand limit," smiled Colonel Masters. "We shall see. Cut!"

He had been steadily shuffling the cards, and as he spoke, he dropped the deck in front of Layden Gray, who sat at his right hand.

Gray obeyed.

The first card to fall was a deuce to Lyman Blake.

"Now your queen!" said Colonel Masters, and he tossed a card face downward to Jonathan Dilmore, who sat opposite him.

Nervously Jonathan Dilmore turned the card and at the same time glanced at the cards, a five and a nine spot, which fell to Layden Gray and to Colonel Masters.

Sure enough, the card that he turned over was the *queen of hearts*.

An ejaculation of surprise fell from Jonathan Dilmore's lips.

"Can you do that always?" asked Lyman Blake, mentally resolving that the game would be brief where he was concerned.

Colonel Masters leaned forward upon the table, and, recalling the scattered cards, said quietly:

"My dear Blake, cards are queer things. When the Egyptians made them they had more than mortal assistance. Our friend's whole thought centres on one thing. He swears to-night by the *queen of hearts*. He called for her and lent his whole magnetic force to the deed, and behold, she fell from the deck before him. I will wager that these cards can be shuffled, and shuffled, and cut and shuffled again by an outsider, a disinterested party, one who does not know of what we have spoken, and then placed before Mr. Dilmore within the next five minutes, and then he, blindfolded, can cut the cards three times; and the third cut will produce the queen of hearts."

The announcement was a startling one, and Lyman Blake looked incredulous.

The low-spoken words of Colonel Masters seemed to penetrate to every part of the room, and were overheard by the gentlemen gathered at the other tables.

All paused to listen further, and they heard Lyman Blake retort:

"You speak positively!"

"Yes."

"Will you explain?"

"I cannot. It is only the psychic force latent in the cards. It has been stowed there for ages."

Blake again smiled incredulously.

"It is as I say," said Colonel Masters, quietly. "But it must be done immediately. I have dropped the cards. They lay now as they did before the queen of hearts was cast off."

All listened with intense interest.

"And you are ready to wager?" demanded Lyman Blake.

"Yes, any amount."

"Five thousand dollars?"

"Yes, but you will lose."

Lyman Blake was more than ever incredulous.

"Put up the money," he said.

"I warn you," said Colonel Masters.

For reply Lyman Blake drew forth a well-filled wallet and placed five crisp one thousand dollar greenbacks on the table.

"Touch the bell!" said Colonel Masters.

Layden Gray reached forth and touched an electric button.

At the same time a roll of money appeared in Colonel Masters' hands, and he placed an equal sum on the table beside Lyman Blake's stake.

This had hardly been done when the door of the room opened and a boy appeared.

The gentlemen in the room, all interested in the wonderful wager, eagerly left their games and crowded about the parties who were making the bet.

"Boy," said Colonel Masters to the lad, "do you know how to shuffle cards?"

His voice was as calm and even as it ever was.

"Yes, sir," said the boy.

"Take this deck and shuffle them," and he indicated the cards lying on the table before him.

The boy raised them wonderingly.

"Shuffle them thoroughly!"

"Will that do, sir?" asked the boy, after a momentary manipulation of the pasteboards.

"Touch the bell again," said Colonel Masters to Layden Gray, who did as he was bade.

Then to the boy the man of destiny said:

"Yes; place them on the table."

The boy obeyed.

"Now," said Colonel Masters, calmly, "shuffle them again."

More in wonderment than before, the lad raised the cards and renewed his manipulations.

"You see, gentlemen," said Colonel Masters, "I am directing this exactly as I spoke it?"

"Yes," said Lyman Blake.

A second boy appeared as he spoke.

"Place the cards on the table again," said Colonel Masters, as the new-comer entered.

The boy obeyed.

To the second boy Colonel Masters indicated the cards on the table and said, in a low voice:

"Cut!"

The cards were cut and the lower part placed upon the top of the deck by the boy addressed.

"You can go," said Colonel Masters, and the lad departed.

"Now shuffle again!"

The first boy, trembling with excitement, he knew not why, unless it was owing to the breathless interest of all

the party and the sight of ten thousand dollars lying on the table near the cards, again raised the pasteboards.

"Carefully, do not drop them!" said Colonel Masters, drawing forth his watch.

A minute passed, and he bade the boy desist and leave the room.

"Now blindfold Mr. Dilmore," he said. "Quick!"

A strange gentleman volunteered the service.

"Now cut!"

Slowly, when he had found the location of the cards, Jonathan Dilmore cut them deeply.

"There are just cards enough to cut the same pack once more," said Colonel Masters. "Place the cards face downward and cut again."

"Which pile?" asked the merchant.

"Either, you have two more cuts to make."

"Shall I cut the other pile twice?"

"Any way you please. You are cutting the cards," said Colonel Masters.

"I'll do that," said Jonathan Dilmore.

He reached about until the larger pile lifted from the top of the deck at the previous cutting was found, and then he cut again.

"Face down!" said Masters.

Dilmore carefully laid the cards aside.

"Now cut the third time!"

"I don't know which pile is which."

"It makes little difference, they are all about alike," said Colonel Masters. "Cut again!"

Jonathan Dilmore fumbled about, first near one pile, then another, and then returned to the first, cut once more and made the fourth division of the pack.

"Now," commanded Colonel Masters, "turn up the card of fate."

"I don't know which pile I cut last," said Jonathan Dilmore. "I have got them mixed."

"You will make no mistake," said Colonel Masters. "Turn the cards. Only one pile is needed. When that turns you will see the card as I have predicted."

Lyman Blake, with breathless interest, watched the movement of Jonathan Dilmore's hand as he sought the last cut.

Blake and every onlooker knew just where the last cut lay.

Would Dilmore turn the right pile?

It seemed improbable, as he had announced that he did not know its location among the other packs.

But at random he reached forth and grasped one of the four divisions of the deck.

All were amazed.

It was the third cut!

Dilmore's action had been involuntary.

He obeyed Colonel Masters' last command and turned the cards face upwards.

Then he tore the bandage from his eyes and gazed.

A cry of astonishment went up from all present.

Apparently with a smile resting on her pictured face the queen of hearts lay exposed to view.

Colonel Masters had fairly won the wager.

CHAPTER VI.

DANCING TO THE DEVIL'S MUSIC.

"ARE you satisfied that there was no trick about the affair, gentlemen?" asked Colonel Masters, when the buzz of excitement had subsided sufficiently for him to make his voice heard.

"It was wonderful," said Jonathan Dilmore. "I had no idea that it would happen so."

"I have no doubt that there was no trickery used," said Lyman Blake. "I am satisfied to accept the inevitable and henceforth will believe, as you say, that there is a psychic force about cards that we cannot fathom."

"Then if you are satisfied I will take the liberty of removing these greenbacks. But if you question the honesty of the test you can take back your stake," said Colonel Masters, in his calm, moderate tones. "I would not—"

"Oh no, the stake was fairly won," said Lyman Blake.

"I shall accept the money then," said Colonel Masters.

"Now, gentlemen, let us proceed with the game we were starting upon when this little diversion occurred. The limit shall be a thousand dollars."

"Yes," said Jonathan Dilmore. "I'll back my queen against the world."

"No poker for me now, if you will excuse me, gentlemen," said Lyman Blake quietly. "I do not wish to play. And, what is more, I shall never touch a card again while I live, unless it be to join a social game of whist."

Everybody looked at the speaker in surprise.

"I will return your money," said Colonel Masters, who was about returning a pocket-book to the folds of his waistcoat.

"Sir!" cried Lyman Blake with dignity. "I meant no insinuation. I have told you that I was satisfied. I ask you gentlemen to excuse me from the game. I have had enough. Good-evening," and without further remark he would have left the table and the card-room.

But Jonathan Dilmore interrupted him.

"Stay and see my queen prove a winner," he said.

Beneath his breath Colonel Masters cursed Jonathan Dilmore for a fool, and for the publicity he was giving the subject which so absorbed his mind.

"No," said Lyman Blake. "Your queen may be all right in a tilt at the game of love, but I would warn you to beware of her. She may prove false when the test comes," and then he was gone.

"Can he suspect?" muttered Colonel Masters, between motionless lips.

"I'll fill the vacant seat," said a calm voice, and Colonel Masters looked up inquiringly.

The speaker was a young man of fine appearance and in evening dress.

"That's right, sit down," said Jonathan Dilmore with a pleased intonation of the voice. "Let me introduce my friend, Lorne Prague."

Colonel Masters and Layden Gray acknowledged the introduction, and then the game began.

In Jonathan Dilmore's ears Lyman Blake's words rang with a metallic sound, and kept echoing and re-echoing.

But he finally banished them, and then entered with great interest into the game.

Lorne Prague played a bold game, and at the start was a strong winner.

Colonel Masters steadily lost.

Dilmore kept an even pile of chips, and there was little if any change in the size of Layden Gray's capital.

Colonel Masters, by general consent, officiated as banker. "Yours seems to be a lucky seat. Blake should have kept it," said Jonathan Dilmore.

"Oh, the game is young yet," said Lorne Prague. "I never win at the start but what I lose later on."

And so it proved.

Gradually luck went against him.

His pile dwindled away, and accumulated before Layden Gray.

Colonel Masters won very little.

Jonathan Dilmore still kept even.

"I shall soon quit if this thing keeps on," said Prague, as he purchased a third supply of chips.

That luck had deserted him was more and more apparent as deal after deal was made and he steadily lost.

Jonathan Dilmore was also losing.

Colonel Masters had nearly retrieved his earlier losses.

Layden Gray was a big winner, and fully five thousand dollars ahead of the game.

The next pot was a good one, everybody drawing cards and remaining in to the extent of five hundred each.

"Your age?" said Jonathan Dilmore to Prague. "I'll start it with fifty."

"Fifty better," said Layden Gray, dropping a blue chip onto the pile in the centre of the table.

"Lift that a hundred," said Colonel Masters.

"Five hundred bigger than yours," said Lorne Prague nervously.

"I'm out of this pot, said Jonathan Dilmore, throwing aside his cards.

"Me, too," said Layden Gray.

"Must go you the limit," said Colonel Masters calmly.

Then he lightly dropped fifteen blue chips, each representing a hundred dollars, into the pot.

"Raise you once the same," said Prague looking carefully into his pile.

Ten blue chips and a few white ones alone remained.

Just enough to call, should Colonel Masters raise him again.

And that was just what Masters did do.

"Costs you another thousand," he said, and the ivories rattled from his finger tips into the swelling pile.

"I must call," said Lorne Prague. "My boodle will not stand any longer. What have you got?"

"Flush of hearts!" said Colonel Master

"Mine are spades!"

"King high!"

"Same!"

"Queen!"

"Same!"

"Nine!"

"Same again!"

"Five!"

"Again the same!" said Prague excitedly. He knew now that he had lost.

"Trey!"

"Your coin," cried Prague in a broken voice. "Mine is the duce."

And both hands were thrown on the table.

By one spot, Colonel Masters had won a very pretty little pile.

"I quit," said Prague. "Blake did well to leave this seat!"

"I'll take that for a while," said Jonathan Dilmore. "I am not winning here, and so it will not matter much if I lose there."

"Yes; and it will be a good place to test your queen," said Lorne Prague. "I'll stand by and look on for a while, if you do not object."

"No objections," said Colonel Masters quickly.

"Yes, that is the thing now; to test the queen of hearts," cried Jonathan Dilmore.

"Three-handed is not much of a game," said Layden Gray.

"I guess we can lose enough," said Dilmore.

"Your deal," said Colonel Masters, passing the cards to Dilmore.

The first pot, a light one, was taken by Layden Gray.

Jonathan Dilmore took the second, and Colonel Masters won third.

Then Dilmore won again.

Then again.

And still a fourth time.

His pile got larger than it had been at all during the game.

What! still another pot?

"Well, this is wonderful!" he said. "My queen is a perfect lady."

But the next three pots went to Layden Gray.

Colonel Masters won the next, and Dilmore began to think that he was not in it.

"Make this a jack," said Colonel Masters.

"Jack pot goes," said Layden Gray, who was dealing.

"What do you say, Mr. Dilmore?"

For answer, Jonathan Dilmore drew forth his watch, and glanced nervously at the dial.

Ten minutes of twelve o'clock.

Almost midnight.

He started almost imperceptibly, but both Colonel Masters and Layden Gray noted the involuntary movement.

"Let it be a jack pot," said Dilmore. "It's late, so let it be the last."

"Deal the cards!" said Colonel Masters, with a kick under the table to Gray.

Gray proceeded to shuffle, and then passed the deck to Dilmore to be cut.

Then he shuffled again, and tossed off the requisite number of cards.

"Can't open," said Masters.

"Open for a hundred," said Jonathan Dilmore, holding up a full, pat, with fours on top.

"Costs five hundred more to draw cards," said Layden Gray, discarding two cards and dropping six blue chips onto the table.

"That goes," laughed Colonel Masters. "I've only a little pair, but I'm going to see you out. Give me the cards."

"There are three nice ones right off the top of the heap," said Gray, in a sort of bantering tone.

"None!" said Jonathan Dilmore when Gray looked at him inquiringly.

Gray lifted his eyebrows, and Colonel Masters, whose three cards still lay on the table, looked surprised.

"I'll take two," said Layden Gray.

To Lorne Prague it looked like a "dead cinch" for Jonathan Dilmore.

"Make your bet," said Colonel Masters to the merchant, and again he kicked Layden Gray under the table. "You opened."

"Touch the limit," said Jonathan Dilmore, and ten blue chips went on an errand.

"Lifted once," said Gray and he dropped in twenty chips, all blue.

"Same again," said Masters, and one after another he counted out thirty pieces of blue ivory.

Lorne Prague was surprised.

Were the two opponents of Dilmore bluffing?

Or, what had they drawn?

Dilmore was more than surprised.

"It's bluff," he said to himself, "I'll see them along."

And once more he raised the pot a thousand better.

"Another lift," cried Layden Gray.

"A thousand more than you," said Colonel Masters.

"Up it goes," said Dilmore and to himself he added, "That will make them weaken."

But it didn't.

Gray lifted again; and then, in his turn, Colonel Masters made another raise.

In chips and cash, twenty-four thousand dollars now lay on the table.

Jonathan Dilmore began to lose courage.

What if the others had drawn good cards?

They knew his strength.

At least he believed that they were pretty certain of it.

"Sure it is that he hold all his cards either to blind a four, or because he needed them all. The chances were that he needed all, and if that were so, he held either a full, a flush or a straight. He weakened. His pile was low, and he decided that it was time to quit raising."

"I'm done," he said. "I ask for a show for my money," and then he slid twenty two hundred dollars to the centre of the table.

It was enough to see the last two raises, and to lift the stake a couple of hundred higher.

"Two hundred calls," said Gray, and then, in turn, Colonel Masters met the raise.

"Now what have you got?" said Jonathan Dimmore. "I have three four and a pair of three spots," and he tossed his cards on the table.

"No good!" cried Layden Gray in a jubilant tone. "I'll take the money. Three eights and a couple of sixes. My pot!"

"Oh, no!" Not an instant, my lad," said Colonel Masters, laying down his cards. "Four real pretty little deuces and the Queen of Hearts are bold enough to claim what lies on the table. I had two of them to start with, and the others came from the grab bag. Sorry, but I'll handle that lump myself."

He spoke jocosely, and, as he did so, raked in twenty-six thousand four hundred dollars from the table.

"There is no need of counting them," he said, as he slid the chips into a box.

"Cards are queer things," said Lorne Prague, who, in dismay, had seen Jonathan Dimmore's pile vanish as his own had done. "Your queue went back on you, Mr. Dimmore."

"Yes, so she did," admitted the merchant, with a sort of sickly smile, as he rose to his feet. "But then you know the old saying, unlucky at cards, lucky in love."

"I hope you may win at that," said Colonel Masters.

"There is no doubt of it," said Dimmore, and then by his watch, as he left the card-room, he saw the midnight had come.

Hurriedly he made his way toward the upper deck forward. At his heels a skulking figure followed.

CHAPTER VII.

JONATHAN DILMORE'S AWAKENING.

JOCKO KELLY'S life on board the Cunard steamer *Seythia* was one of dull monotony and hard work. He had bribed one of the dock-hands, before the vessel sailed, to give up his berth to him; and then, asking nobody's permission, he sailed in the young Englishman's berth.

Jocko Kelly was utterly a green hand, and knew absolutely nothing about the duties of the position he was to fill.

He had only dared escape from under the eyes of the Boston police, and this he had succeeded in doing.

When he went on board the *Seythia*, five minutes before she sailed, he passed a couple of patrolmen, unnoticed, at the gangway.

In his seaman's toga he was not known.

At a safe high place he placed his thumb to his nose and wiggled his

finger in that direction.

When he was discovered in the berth of the regular man there was a row on board the ship, but it soon subsided.

His real identity was not known, and as he was there he had to stay, and the ship's officers had to make the best of it.

He had a lot of hard, rough work to do, but he got along pretty well, although, when he had a chance, he shirked the tasks he was set to do.

Hard work and Jocko Kelly never agreed very well.

When he had an opportunity to hear what was going on about him among the passengers, he kept his ears alert.

As the reader knows, it was not long ere he sized up the plot going on between Colonel Masters and his crowd against Merchant Dimmore.

To take a hand, when the time came, was Jocko Kelly's intention.

He saw Jonathan Dimmore's infatuation for Florence Pelton, and saw and heard much of the conversation between them when they were left alone.

He heard the woman agree to meet Dimmore on the forward deck at midnight, and several other things; and heard certain sums of money mentioned.

"She's a cat!" was Jocko Kelly's comment when he saw the couple separate, the woman to return to her stateroom and the merchant to his own.

Then Kelly saw the man Layden Gray pass into his own stateroom, and then he heard loud words in the woman's compartment, next adjoining Gray's, proving that the two staterooms were connected.

"You are my wife," he heard Gray say, "and you must not forget it."

So here was an added perplexity to the case.

Layden Gray claimed Florence Pelton for his wife!

There was no doubt but what they were both assumed names.

Who were they in reality?

Jocko Kelly was positive he had seen them both before.

Yes, as he had at first felt, he was impressed by their resemblance to somebody he had seen elsewhere.

What the woman had said Kelly had not heard, nor did he distinguish much more that was said by them.

He had no business in the cabin, but the Artful Dodger cared not for rules and regulations, and went about where and when he pleased.

But at last he was ordered to his own quarters, and had to leave the vicinity of the stateroom.

Later in the evening, after supper it was, Kelly had once again seen Jonathan Dimmore and the woman together on deck.

When they separated Dimmore went to the card-room and the woman to the main saloon.

Late in the evening, nearly eleven o'clock it was; and she went to her stateroom.

The key turned in the lock, and it was evident to Jocko Kelly, who had once more managed to gain a point of observation, that she was there to stay.

And she did.

Kelly was on deck at midnight, and in waiting for the appearance of Jonathan Dimmore.

Promptly as the eight bells were struck, the familiar and portly figure of the merchant came into view from below deck.

Scarcely had he appeared than a second figure followed.

It was Layden Gray.

Gray had held a stormy interview with his wife, as he claimed Florence Pelton to be, and had learned of her intention, according to orders from Colonel Masters, of meeting Jonathan Dimmore at midnight upon the forward deck.

He had stormed, and finally she had agreed to brave Colonel Masters' anger, and give up her part of the plot against the merchant.

Before Gray's jealousy had been roused to such a feverish pitch, he had been willing to have Florence work in the scheme, but now—well, things had changed.

Gray was not very deeply in Colonel Masters' power, and he didn't care how soon he left the employ of the man of destiny.

After leaving his wife's stateroom, he had gone to Masters in the card-room and made a bold kick to him.

When Jonathan Dimmore left the card-room, in expectancy of meeting his charmer, he had not noticed that Gray followed after him.

Colonel Masters also failed to observe Gray's action.

Gray thought it best to follow the merchant, to see if his wife had kept her word to him.

He stole cautiously along, and soon saw Dimmore about ten feet in advance, and near the merchant he saw a smaller figure, half hidden in the shadow of the foremast of the vessel.

A sharp pain shot through his heart as the thought struck him that Florence had lied to him when she promised to forego the meeting.

Softer and slower he crept forward.

Three feet separated them from him.

Suddenly the smaller figure vanished.

"Yes, it's she," he cried to himself. "She is false! Dimmore shall pay for this!"

Then with a bound he sprang forward, and the next instant he had clutched the merchant by the throat in a death clutch.

Then the two men swayed a moment, and both fell.

Dimmore, overcome by the furious onslaught of the young man, and the latter overcome by the very violence of his attack.

They fell to the deck together; Dimmore powerless, and Layden Gray on top of him, choking the life out of him.

Suddenly a swishing sound was heard above Layden Gray's head, a blow sounded, and the mad young man toppled over sideways, knocked senseless.

Jocko Kelly had taken a hand in the game.

The Artful Dodger had waited patiently for Dimmore's coming to the deck. The merchant had finally arrived, and then had come his disappointment at not finding the woman, as she had twice agreed.

He muttered a few earnest oaths in an undertone and was about to leave the place when a slim figure stood beside him, and a man's voice said:

"Radder hard luck, ain't it? She's no good. Youse is better off wid her out of de way!"

Jocko Kelly was the speaker.

In the deep gloom of the dimly-lighted deck Jonathan Dimmore could see that the man who addressed him was a member of the steamer's crew.

"How had he known what was going on?" the merchant asked himself beneath his breath, but Jocko Kelly's quick ear heard him.

"I saw yer skin," he heard the woman say she'd be here. But she won't. Her husband is dead on to yer, and he's shut down on der game."

Jonathan Dimmore was astounded.

Florence Pelton's husband!

"Impossible! She's not married," he said in a low tone to Kelly.

"Yes, she is," said Jocko. "Der bloke wot calls hisself Layden Gray is her husband. Oh, you're not fly, or you'd have known it. Shi! Here's somebody a-comin' to sneek!"

And with the second's loss of time the Artful Dodger was out of sight, leaving Jonathan Dimmore to fall into the clutch of Layden Gray the next moment.

Kelly saw all that was passing, and in a second he grasped a belying pin from the mast and stole upon Gray, who held his victim helpless, in a quiet manner.

Aiming a careful blow, he let Gray have it, and then the young man toppled over sideways and lay motionless.

Jonathan Dimmore did not stir.

Down on his hands and knees Jocko Kelly dropped beside them.

Gray was stunned by the blow, and Jonathan Dimmore was senseless from the choking he had received.

"What dead elegant luck!" cried Kelly. "Now for der diamonds!"

And with nimble fingers the studs and diamond ring were removed from Jonathan Dimmore's person, and then Layden Gray's sparklers were also confiscated.

"Now to sneek," said Kelly; and then leaving the two men where they lay, he sought his bunk with the gems that had attracted his attention not twenty-four hours before.

Finally Dimmore recovered consciousness, and rose to a sitting posture.

At his side was Layden Gray.

A strong temptation came over the merchant to raise the senseless man's body and cast it over the side of the swiftly-rushing steamer.

"No, that will be murder," said Dimmore. "None of that for me. But I'm glad to know that you are a fraud, and that that woman is your wife. I can look out for you now. And by Jupiter! I'll bet that Colonel Masters is another fraud. Did they rob me on that last pot? I'll bet they did. By heavens! there's a plot behind all this! A light comes to me. I can see now where I have been led astray. By lying low and letting on I can, perhaps learn everything. Oh, what a blind fool I have been! How nearly I have come to disgracing myself I can well understand. Deck-hand, whoever you are, you have done me a good turn that I shall not soon forget. But Gray, curse him! is coming to, let him take care of himself to-night. In the future I can take care of him, too," and with a handkerchief drawn close about his aching throat, which bore the marks of Layden Gray's fingers, Jonathan Dimmore hastily made his way to his stateroom, a sadder and a wiser man than he had been when last he had left it.

Layden Gray had a sore head to take to bed with him, and he cursed and raved in an ugly fashion, while his wife's tender fingers dressed the wound Jocko Kelly's cudgel had inflicted.

Florence wanted to know how he got the wound, but Gray himself did not know.

CHAPTER VIII.

COLONEL MASTERS GETS WRATHY.

JOCKO KELLY was "fly." He had given Merchant Dimmore warning that there was a deep plot going on, and that Florence Pelton and Layden Gray were in it. Jonathan Dimmore was just long-headed enough to see that his informant had given him a valuable tip, and he profited by it.

Nor was that all.

He suspected Colonel Masters of complicity in the case, and determined to look after him.

Of course he was not yet aware of the fact that to Colonel Masters' machinations could be traced the complications that were enshrouding his beautiful affair.

But Jocko Kelly's tip was a stepping-stone to that end.

The Artful Dodger had indeed done Jonathan Dimmore a good service; and yet, although the merchant had not yet discovered the fact, the festive crackman had claimed his reward.

Jocko Kelly was no chicken.

Neither was he a charity laborer.

What he did he wanted to be well paid for.

When there was anything in it, the Artful Dodger was always on hand.

His roguery was not even compulsory, and he had not at all liked the prospect of the ocean trip.

It had been lots of fun fooling the cops; but, after all, the fun all left the frolic as soon as they had been fooled.